

**Name:** Nicholaus Mills

**Hometown:** Waxhaw, North Carolina

**Law School:** Cornell Law '19

**Seminar Year:** Summer 2019



## **Mills to Clerk on the Supreme Court for the 2023 Term**

Nicholaus Mills, a first-generation J.D., grew up in Waxhaw, North Carolina. Raised by his immigrant father and industrious mother, Mills quickly learned the value of a strong work ethic and unabating faith. After graduating from Oral Roberts University in 2015, Mills spent a year overseas volunteering with a non-profit. He then matriculated into the Cornell J.D./M.B.A. program, planning to leverage this education into a consulting career. This path abruptly changed after his first day of Civil Procedure. Compelled by the intriguing complexity of legal analysis, Mills set his sights on a legal career of impact. In 2019, Mills graduated first in his class from Cornell Law School with his J.D./M.B.A., accruing over a dozen academic awards along the way.

Mills just finished a clerkship in Austin, Texas under the inimitable Judge Don Willett of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judge Willett explains,

“Nick is an exceptional lawyer and an even better person. Brilliant. Indefatigable. And unfailingly cheerful. Most impressive, though, is that Nick intends to leverage his uncommon talents selflessly, not to enrich himself, but to enrich those around him. Nick is prodigiously gifted, and he wants to harness those gifts for good.”

In 2022 Mills will clerk for Judge Rachel Kovner on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York. In 2023 Mills will clerk for Justice Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court of the United States.

*The following interview was conducted for the [Georgetown Center for the Constitution](#) Alumni Association in July 2020.*

**Question: How did you hear about the Originalism Summer Seminar?**

Answer: The Seminar has an unparalleled reputation in the judicial world. As an aspiring clerk, I was told there is no better place to steep in foundational originalism than Georgetown's Originalism Summer Seminar program. In fact, when I was exploring the clerkship application process, multiple mentors emphasized the benefit of attending the Seminar both to secure a clerkship and to succeed while clerking. They were not wrong.

**Q: What was one of your favorite academic components of the Seminar?**

A: I enjoyed the Seminar's second day where the group learned from Professors Larry Solum, Mike Rappaport, Steven Sachs, and Jack Balkin. Together, the professors advocated for competing theories of originalism, ranging from Original Public Meaning to Original Law. Coming in to the Seminar, I had only learned about originalism as a broad approach to interpreting legal text. Learning about the various strands of originalism solidified my own view: Original Public Meaning originalism is the proper method of interpreting legal text.

**Q: How will you use what you learned in the Seminar in your future career?**

A: I have a couple takeaways, and this is certainly not an exhaustive list. First, the Seminar gave me a nuanced understanding of my own views on textual interpretation. But more than just developing my own views, the Seminar helped me understand why I believe my view is correct to the exclusion of others. This knowledge allows me to both articulate and defend my views effectively. Second, the Seminar provided an exceptional network of like-minded, high-powered individuals—people I aspire to be like. To this day I continue to run into fellow Seminar alumni; we all run in similar circles and enjoy catching up and lending a hand when possible.

**Q: What are you up to now?**

A: Currently I am finishing up my clerkship on the Fifth Circuit with Judge Don Willett. It has been an incredible experience. Working for a brilliant jurist like Judge Willett will forever mold you as a lawyer. Moreover, his kind mentorship has taught me how to be a better person. This Fall I will move back to New York and join Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. Then, in 2022, I will clerk for Judge Rachel Kovner on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York. In 2023 I will clerk for Justice Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court of the United States. It is an honor to have even been considered for these positions. I am incredibly grateful for these opportunities and humbled that others believe in me more than I believe in myself.

**Q: For the young lawyers who aspire to clerk on the Supreme Court someday, how should they set themselves up for success?**

A: Clerking on the Supreme Court is the opportunity of a lifetime. And, as with most opportunities of this nature, you can only get there by working hard, having others help you, and being on the right side of

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luck. For me, the most important step I took was to find mentors who believed in me. One such mentor is Judge Willett, who advocated for me when I needed it most. And he was among dozens of supporters who graciously put their names on the line for me. Everyone who wants to clerk on the Supreme Court is smart and talented. But, to actualize this dream, you must have a network of staunch advocates. I was lucky enough to stumble upon a number of these exceptional individuals, to whom I owe more than I could ever express. Beyond that, simply take every opportunity to improve yourself, focus on being the best wherever you are, and have faith.

**Q: Any advice for future applicants/attendees of the Seminar?**

A: Do not go into the Seminar to confirm what you already think—challenge your beliefs and grow. Be sure to pick up the various intellectual tools and the language of legal theory. Most of all, take advantage of this network and be intentional with how you use it.

**Q: Finally, any reading suggestions?**

A: For a law reading, I highly recommend *51 Imperfect Solutions: States and the Making of American Constitutional Law* by Judge Jeffrey Sutton. For a non-law reading I'll go with one of my all-time favorite novels, *Less Than Zero* by Bret Easton Ellis. It is a pretty jarring depiction of how destructive nihilistic culture can be.

Applications for the [2021 Originalism Summer Seminar](#) will open this Fall.